Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) had requested the Deptt. of Food & Civil Supplies to furnish a factual report on the wheat import deal and accordingly the requisite report was furnished to CVC on 6th May, 1998 by that Deptt. Central Bureas, Investigation (CBI) sought relevant records regarding import of wheat by STC and the Ministries of Commerce and Food have made these available to CBI. Based on an assurance given by the Minister of Food & Consumer Affairs during the discussions on a calling Attention Motion regarding import of wheat on 9.6.98, necessary action is being taken by the Deptt. of Food & Civil Supplies.

A quantity of 7.53 lakh MT of wheat has arrived at the Indian Ports as on 22.6.98.

(c) STC contracted for import of 15 lakh tonnes of wheat from Australia on FOB basis @ US $ 142.50 per tonne during 1998-99.

(d) and (e) The stocks of wheat in the central pool as on 1st January, 1998 was 67.56 lakh tonnes as against 77 lakh tonnes required to be maintained as per the buffer stock norms prescribed. Due to the untimely rains during the sowing season, the Ministry of Agriculture had initially estimated that production of wheat during 1997-98 (marketed during 1998-99) was likely to be 64.51 million tonnes as against the production of 69.27 million tonnes during the previous year. After considering the relevant factors, the Govt. decided to import upto 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during 1998-99, against which STC has already contracted for import of 15 lakh tonnes of wheat from Australia.

Export Potential of Information Technology

2149. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any assessment has been made of the export potential of the Information Technology from India;

(b) if so, the details of the broad pattern emerging for the different regions of the World, say, for the next ten years; and

(c) the steps being taken to identify and encourage Indian software and other services in Information Technology available in specific regions/towns of the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir. Department of Electronics and Electronics Computer Software Export Promotion Council have made the assessment.

(b) Presently the major markets for exports in this sector are USA, Canada, Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Asia etc. More than 80% of our exports are going to above mentioned countries. Efforts are being made to develop Africa, Latin America, Russia, CIS, Middle East, Japan, Korea and Far East as our future markets.

(c) Department of Electronics has already established 7 Software Technology Parks (STPs) one each at Bangalore, Bhubneshwar, Hyderabad, Gandhinagar, Noida, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram.

DOE has formulated policy guideline for providing assistance to new STPs promoted with state initiative. Under this provision, new STPs have been supported one each at Mohali (Punjab), Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra).

Export of non-basmati rice

2150. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for sharp fluctuations in the exports of rice, particularly, non-basmati rice in the recent past;

(b) whether the credibility of the country is suffering because of undependable supplies; and

(c) what are the export projections for rice for the Ninth Five Year Plan, both basmati and non-basmati, in terms of quantity and value?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The exports of rice including non-basmati rice depend upon the international demand and supply position, prices prevailing in the international and domestic markets, consumer preferences, different varieties traded, variation in quality and other terms of trade.

(b) India's credibility is adversly affected when supplies are undependable.

(c) The export projections for the Ninth Five Year Plan have not been formulated.

Financial assistance to rubber marketing federation

2151. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received a request from the Kerala Government for financial assistance of Rs. 100 crores to the Rubber Marketing Federation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's decision thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Dumping of Titanium Dioxide

2152. SHRI J.CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that certain multi-national companies are dumping Titanium dioxide in India and they sell the same at very low costs;

(b) whether Government are aware that this dumping along with the reduction in import duty from 85% in 1991 to 40% now are leading to the ruin of the two Kerala State owned public sector industries, Titanium products and KMML; and

(c) the necessary steps Government propose to take to save these industrial units?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government has not received any petition requesting for levy of anti-dumping duty on Titanium dioxide, nor has the domestic industry indicated any injury on account of the alleged dumped imports.

(c) Question does not arise.

Import of Items under OGL

2153. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether hundreds of import items were recently put on OGL;

(b) their complete list;

(c) the rationals for this policy;

(d) how much of a drain on our foreign exchange this OGL Policy is likely to be; and

(e) what will be impact of these liberalised imports on production and employment within the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) 340 items have been shifted from the Restricted list to the Free list of imports with effect from 13.04.98. List of these 340 items is attached. [*See* Appendix 184, Annexure No 66]

(c) Quantitative restrictions have to be gradually phased out by the year 2003 as per the Agreements entered into with the trading partners.

(d) The volume of import in respect of items put in the free list is not expected to be significant as judged by last year's import trends. However, the actual outgo of foreign exchange would be known only after watching the trend of actual imports for a period of atleast one year.